

## From Swiss peaks to Thai streets, riding through Jan & Oscar's memories. A meaningful expedition.

### A tsunami in my life,

It was the 26th of December 2004, the earth shook under the Indian ocean just off the island of Sumatra. Like thousands of other people we were on a beach when several gigantic waves crashed onto the shore, injuring and killing thousands of people.



This particular beach was that of a beautiful hotel in Khao Lak, north of Phuket in Thailand. My father took us there as a treat and to spend the Christmas holidays together just after he and my mother separated.

That morning, our first there, I was playing on the beach with my two brothers, whilst my father and sister were having massages close to the hotel overlooking the sea. The place was heavenly. Quite suddenly, the water receded like a tide and far out to sea the water seemed to be bubbling. Not understanding what was

happening, we continued playing until my father came running down the beach, yelling and shouting, telling us to leave. In a moment of panic we started to run, then there was just blackness, drowning, the turbulent water became more and more yellow, a moment which seemed like an eternity, before the surface reappeared, finally ! .... As the current carried me along, I held on to a tree, my last chance to grab onto anything before being swept out to sea with the water.

Then the water receded, giving way to a terrible and desolate sight. By chance, I found my father, injured. We climbed the hill, luckily escaping the following set of waves which hit violently shortly after.

After being turned away from several hospitals and dispensaries in the region, each more crowded than the last, we were finally repatriated to Switzerland. Only my sister was found alive; she was taken in by a Swiss couple, who looked after her and brought her home. We never saw my brothers again. Their bodies were returned to us 6 months later, after a long identification process.

### 20 years later,

In their memory and to commemorate this accident and the impact it had on my life, I would like to return to Thailand once again. It will be 20 years and I feel the need to mark the anniversary with something symbolically forceful.

Rather than jumping in an aeroplane, quickly taking a taxi and finding myself on this same beach without having had the time to make my journey and think about it clearly, I would like to take my time to get there.

Time will be my reflection, the encounters along the way, my enrichment.



I'm going to ride there, on my motorbike.

Motorcyclists probably already know what I am going to describe. Solo motorcycle travel is, in my opinion, very conducive to the type of journey I am hoping to make.

First of all there are long periods of riding, the landscape passing by and our thoughts are free to roam as they please. My trip to Scotland a few years ago, introduced me to this aspect of motorcycle travel during which I experienced moments of euphoria but also intense emotions, alone inside my helmet. In this type of solitude, thoughts are free to roam wherever the mind wishes for them to go. If an opportunity arises to be enjoyed or observed, the mind is also free to be brought back to reality at any given moment. At times, it is thoughts of those who we have left behind that dominate, other times it is as though we are discovering life for the first time.

The other aspect that I like about this sort of journey is that at each stop, and there will be quite a few of them, there is the possibility of a meeting, a passer-by, a petrol station attendant, a shop owner, it doesn't matter. Each time we immerse ourselves a little bit into the lives and culture of the region we are passing through and this is an exhilarating feeling. This exchange is only possible by mutual curiosity. This demonstrates the ability of the natives to interrupt their routine to come and meet us. By arriving in a village, without warning, we disrupt the daily lives of its inhabitants. Those who accept this upheaval, in my opinion, have the desire and curiosity to discover the other which prevails over the fear of the stranger.

### **Before leaving,**

This trip, which I have been thinking about for several years, involves a certain organisation and a few concessions. I am married, a father to two wonderful little girls but also employed in a job that I enjoy. Leaving for 3 or 4 months does not only imply that I can free myself from my work for this period. In addition to organising the trip itself, I must also ensure that my wife and daughters want for nothing during my absence. My wish would also be that I could spend some time with my family in Thailand at the end of the trip. This would give us the opportunity to visit people who

have worked for or benefitted from the help of the Jan and Oscar foundation. Accompanied by my mother, what stronger symbol of hope and love could we show them than going to visit them in their homes.

The itinerary of my trip will almost certainly be modified, but my intention is to leave Switzerland at the beginning of September 2024 via Italy. This would be followed by going through Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Türkiye, leaving Europe for the middle east. The logical route to continue towards Asia would be to travel through Iran, Pakistan and India, hoping to make a small detour into Nepal. Myanmar seems to be reopening its borders to tourists which suggest that it may be possible to cross this magnificent country to reach Thailand.

However, if crossing Myanmar should not be possible, I will be forced to bypass this country via China and Laos or by sending my motorbike and myself from Kathmandu to Bangkok by plane. Thus completing the last part of this adventure in the land of smiles.



### **Making a contribution,**

My trip is not only a personal quest but is also a way of supporting the Jan & Oscar Foundation created by my mother after the death of my brothers. As such, I would like to contribute to the construction of a school in a region hard hit by the tsunami. This school mainly welcomes disadvantaged children who deserve our support.

To help me keep my commitment, you can encourage me by making a donation to the account whose details you can find below.

I would like to point out that all donations are exempt from tax and that they are entirely dedicated to this mission.

If you would like more information or have any questions do not hesitate to contact me before or after the trip. I will be more than happy to reply.

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### **Help the Jan & Oscar foundation:**

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